881 302 On the same day the young girls in certain localities have a characteristic ceremony. One of them whitens her face, breast, and back with a mixture of milk and ashes. Thus daubed, she dashes out of the village brandishing the spatula (to-n-galama) which is used to stir mush (to) in the pot; her companions follow her, shouting. The band goes around the village four times in this fashion, each time stopping at the crossroads. At these points the girl who is bedaubed throws handfuls of food (1), provided by her companions, to the spirits,

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1. Usually basi (couscous) made with fish.

crying: "Dege dule (2)." Her companions reply: "Naloma (3)."

2. Literally, "thick mush."

3. That is, "fool."

881 527 [273] [576] The eve of the soli (soli-si). During the evening preceding the soli, the families concerned enjoy an ample meal, accompanied by innumerable jugs of beer (dlo) as is the custom at all festivals among the Bambara. This is a time of special merriment, of shining faces and greasy hands, and it is good form for the men and boys to belch noisily, saying repeatedly: "ne ne fa," literally, "I am full," that is, "I am replete." The [301] women wander about the lanes, wrapped in their best skirts, with balls of amber in their hair and small silver or even gold rings in their ears and nostrils and rather heavy bracelets on their [482] arms and ankles. Some carry jars of dlo on their heads, while others carry gourds full of couscous, dege, or hot sauces which are often nauseous with smoked or spoiled fish. After the meal everyone gathers on the public square, forming a wide circle whose center is reserved for the dancers; piles of dried millet [373] stalks are used to make bright fires which illuminate the scene and warm the audience.

881 302 The "boys of the soli" (soli-ma-tye-u), their heads freshly

575 a sense of solidarity among the ton'-den'. In reality, the
561 bachelor ton'-den' are principally concerned with amassing as much food as possible for the sole purpose of treating themselves to copious and merry banquets from time to time; for this purpose, all means are acceptable. Each member brings to the group whatever he can lay his hands on; in addition, the society assesses its members for contributions to swell the common fund. [291] First, there are the entrance fees and assessments in kind, particularly of grain. Then there are fines for infractions of the rules, involving penalties whose purpose is simply the enrichment of the group's treasury. At certain meetings, for instance, the most ordinary acts may not be performed unless permission has been given by the ton'-tigi or the dyala-tigi. A member who squats, rises, speaks, sneezes, or laughs before being authorized to do so is fined. Finally, the society goes on organized hunts, and the game thus acquired is distributed among the members on the basis of strict equality.

[587] Ordinarily the ton'-den' meet twice a week, on Monday and Thursday; these are the free days allotted to the poor people (fantan'-u), that is, people who are wholly under control.

The ton'-tigi can make no important decision without the prior advice and agreement of the ton'-den', but this does not mean that his role is negligible. His initiative determines the orientation of acts, and he later sees to their execution. Therefore, if he is a clever man, he actually has almost sole command over an organization capable of exerting powerful pressure on the native milieu, which by nature is amorphous, because a fla-n-ton' is not an isolated group. It is linked with the one that preceded it and the one immediately following it by a kind of solidarity, so that native society, from this point of view, is made up of an uninterrupted series of fla-n-ton' closely bound to each other, since the same chain of relationship prevails for women and since every male fla-n-ton' has a brotherhood relationship with the corresponding female fla-n-ton'.

[627] If a difference arises between members of the same fla-n-ton', the "elders" of the preceding fla-n-ton', i.e., the one immediately older, intervene as conciliators to settle the quarrel.

that period; his body will not be buried but will be carried off by members of the Komo, who will take it to a crossroads and crush it with the aid of komo-se-w [sic]. The remains will be hidden in a secret place. The same treatment is accorded to the komo-tigi who dies during his seven-year term.

The cult is cantonal, and the various komo-tigi take their orders from their colleagues of the capital. The cult formerly was interican and intertribal. Labouret (Les Mandingues et leur langue [The Mandingo and Their Language]) has made a table of the seven categories of persons who make up the hierarchical society of the initiates.

After initiation into the Komo cult, a natural sequel to circumcision, the young man may, if he so desires, be initiated into other cults. He then enters a powerful spiritual family which unites all its members by ties of brotherhood. This brotherhood is superimposed on the normal social hierarchy of the flã-tõ [this term is probably the same as flanton]. The chief of the brotherhood is entitled nyama-tigi; he is generally a man of caste or a slave. He acquires his position as chief either by inheriting it, by election, or by founding a new cult. To do this latter, he must buy an altar, gna, from the village or from the brotherhood that already possesses this cult. Such a purchase is considered a marriage with the gna and is accompanied by drinking. The higher-ranking initiates (dyenfaw: masters of the truth) are auxiliaries of the nyama-tigi and participate in the oracle, wara-da. All the initiates are more or less divine. The clergy includes, in addition, a sacrificer, muru-kala-tigi, and a dyeli, herald of the god. To become one of the faithful, one must pay an entrance fee and swear an oath of secrecy, obedience, and fellowship. The clergy manages the cult's treasury which is fed by the entrance fees to the brotherhood, by fees levied for a class promotion, by contributions required for the major ceremonies, and by fines imposed on the members.

The brotherhood is a spiritual family which is organized in a fashion similar to the natural filiation of the community. The nyama-tigi plays the role of the fa; the dyen-fa-w and the notable members form a sort of council for settling, with the chief, all questions. The cult does nothing on Mondays and Thursdays, the work holidays.

754 of poison, and the brown powder concealed in it is usually Strophanthus
674 seed /53/ crushed and kneaded into excreta of human corpses and
278 saliva taken from their mouths. This mixture is dried in the shade and then wrapped in a piece of hyena intestine, and to render the effects more immediate and certain, the fetish is brought out and placed on this meal and a sacrifice made. These sacrosanct preparations are made at night, if possible in the first quarter of the moon, and never on a Monday or Thursday, which are days of rest for the boli gods (1).

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1. The boli have two days' leave per week, and the Negroes also take this rest. However, they are broad-minded on this point even though for certain labors they ask the religious chief or a sorcerer to be allowed to work. As a rule a boli may not go out Sunday or Monday night nor on Wednesday or Thursday. They quite often do go out, however, but only by command of the fetish or a sorcerer. To bring out a fetish is to spend the night dancing the dance of the fetish, and when the initiates want to dance they always manage to do so. The boli are also sacrificed to on Monday and Thursday even though they are at rest. In theory there is rest for the fetishes; actually, the idea is loosely applied.

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674 To succeed and to keep from displeasing the fetish, who would then abandon your cause and turn against you, you must follow the prescriptions of the priest and members of his council to the letter; the omission of one rite, one sign, one formula, one imprecation, destroys the power of the poison contained in the horn, or at least renders it ineffective. Sometimes this powder is thrown and is called korti sou, and at other times it is poured and is called dounkono di.